

**For Immediate Release:
0800 CT on October 19, 2020**

**Contact:
Adam Matzner, Chief Investigator: 402-471-2027**

***News Release:
Columbus, Platte County***

COLUMBUS – At approximately 5:42 Saturday morning, Columbus Fire Department responded to reports of a house fire at 1052 20th Ave. Upon arrival, firefighters found heavy smoke coming from the house with an active fire in the living room. Four individuals occupying the house at the time of the fire were transported to Columbus Community Hospital where they were pronounced deceased.

The victims have been identified as Lars Barcel, 27, Janelle Miller, 28, and two children all of Columbus. Preliminary autopsy results indicate the cause of death was smoke inhalation related to the fire.

Following a joint investigation, State Fire Marshal Investigators along with the Columbus Police Department determined an ember from the wood burning fireplace ignited nearby combustible materials. Battery operated smoke detectors were present in the house; however, the investigation found that the batteries were not connected.

Responding agencies included the Columbus Fire Department, Columbus Rural Fire Department, Columbus Police Department, Midwest Medical and the Platte County Attorney's Office.

###

Nebraska State Fire Marshal Agency

OFFICE 402-471-2027

sfm.nebraska.gov | [Facebook](#)

Arson Hotline 1-888-WY-ARSON